

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, November 21, 1896, with transcript

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL TO MABEL (Hubbard) BELL Beinn Bhreagh Laboratory Annex. Saturday, November 21, 1896. My dear little wifie:

Reading-Room idea grows upon me. Have an idea for you. You have neglected to send me copy of the correspondence with the Library Committee so that I cannot form judgement regarding their position. Mr. Blanchard also has failed to send me copy of the correspondence.

I have no doubt they had good reasons for their action — and after all the Library is not large enough — nor the books important enough to have a reading-room established for them alone. Any way the position seems to be this:

You have offered the Library Committee the use of Gertrude Hall as a Reading-Room — and \$50.00 per month towards salary of attendant and etc., — for the winter months.

This offer has been declined. You have done your duty in the matter and your conscience is clear.

What next? Insist upon further consideration of your offer — with increase of appropriation for expenses?

I think not. Let the Committee alone — and open a Reading-Room yourself. Don't talk any more about it — but do it.

Ask Miss McCurdy to take charge of it — and associate with her and some others as a Committee. I would suggest:

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Miss Georgian McCurdy

Mr. and Mrs. Gwillum

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Mr. and Mrs. McDougall

Mr. and Mrs. Blanchard

Miss McPhee (or if she is absent — some one from the Academy to represent the young people.)

You to provide the Reading-Room — attendant — heating, lighting, furnishing and etc., — and they to provide the reading-material.

A loan collection of newspapers, periodicals, books and etc.

Offer them during the winter the use of all the newspapers and periodicals we take in — and the back numbers of periodicals and etc., — and some books.

And ask them to contribute themselves and solicit others to loan to the Reading-Room (after they have finished reading them themselves) — such newspapers, periodicals, or books as they can spare and the Committee desire to accept, for the use and benefit of others. All to be plainly marked with the owner's name and returned at close of season — or when desired by owner. In similar manner let Committee request Public Library to loan to the Reading-Room — books of reference (that cannot well be allowed to be taken home — such as encyclopaedias etc.,) and such other books as may seem desirable. But upon this plan you are independent of library altogether. They can help or not as they choose best — and the management will be in your hands and your committee.

More to follow tonight.

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Your loving, Alec.